

St. Mary's Seminary Chapel  
North Paca Street,  
Baltimore, Maryland.

HABS No. Md. 13

HABS  
MD.

4. BALT

18A-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Maryland

Historic American Buildings Survey  
John H. Scarff, District Officer  
1012 Keyser Building, Baltimore, Md.

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18A.

THE CHAPEL  
of  
ST. MARY'S SEMINARY  
North Paca Street  
Baltimore, Maryland

OWNERS

The Associated Professors of  
St. Mary's Seminary of Balti-  
more City.

DATE OF ERECTION

1806-1808

ARCHITECT

Maximillian Godefroy.

BUILDER

Mr. Weiss.

PRESENT CONDITION

Excellent. - the size of the Chapel  
remains almost as it was originally.

No tower was erected till 1840 when  
Robert Carey Long built the one that  
stood until 1915. It was then found  
unsafe and razed.

In 1861 a large Crucifix was removed  
from the rear wall to make way for  
the semi-circular Shrine of the Vir-  
gin. At the same time, when the pub-  
lic was no longer admitted to worship,  
the Communion Rail and the Pulpit were  
removed.

The original altar was replaced in 1842  
by the present marble altar which was  
designed by Robert Carey Long, the  
Architect. In 1916 the altar was mov-  
ed nearer the Shrine of the Virgin to  
make a larger Sanctuary and the wooden  
choir stalls and the tester over the  
altar were installed under the direction  
of Mr. Wilfred E. Anthony of New York.  
At that time, the present black and  
white tile floor was laid.

Originally the approach to the Chapel  
was from the West, from Pennsylvania  
Ave. through a small enclosed court.

NUMBER OF STORIES

Two.

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MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION

Brick exterior walls trimmed with moulded brick and Aquia Creek stone.

Wooden roof and floor construction. The Interior Columns are entirely of wood. The Interior plaster <sup>on walls</sup> and Wood columns are richly painted, gray, black and white, red and gold. The plaster vaulting is blue. The Testar gold.

The principal facade has been painted gray, but the red bricks show now through the worn paint.

The roof is of slate.

OTHER EXISTING RECORDS

The Architect's Drawings in the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

Magazine of the Maryland Historical Society, Vol. XXIX No. 1, pages 1-20 March 1934:

"The Sulpicians in the United States" by Charles G. Herbermann, New York 1916.

"The Architect of St. Mary's Chapel" by Father Boyer, S.S. published in "THE VOICE", Baltimore May 1933, page 13.

"St. Mary's Chapel of the Olden Times", by Father Hewit, published in "THE VOICE", January 1930, page 21.

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HISTORICAL DATA:

The 27th. day of February, 1785 marks the birthday of the Organized Roman Catholic Church of the United States, for on that day the Reverend John Carroll of Baltimore accepted the appointment by Pope Pius VI to the office of Superior of the Mission of the Thirteen United States.

At that time the Catholic Laity of Maryland consisted of some 15,000 and that of Pennsylvania 7,000 souls, New York was estimated to have about 1,500 Catholics. In all the United States, they did not probably exceed 25,000. There were about 25 priests, of whom nineteen were in Maryland.

As early as 1786 and 1787, the Reverend Mr. Carroll expressed his conviction that it was necessary to establish a seminary of the training of priests in the United States. On November 6, 1789 the Pope appointed the Rev. Mr. Carroll bishop of the newly created See of Baltimore and at the same time charged him with the duty to establish a seminary in the new diocese. To that end Bishop Carroll sought the help and advice of the Very Rev. James Andrew Emery, Ninth Superior General of St. Sulpice in Paris.

In due course he selected to be head of the new seminary, Father Francis Charles Nagot, fifty-seven years of age, and for many years connected with the Paris Seminary. Before becoming a director there he had been professor of Theology and head of the School of Philosophy. Those selected to accompany Father Nagot were: Rev. M. Garnier, a linguist, twenty-nine years of age, Professor of Theology at Lyon; Rev. M. Levadoux, director of the seminary at Bourges; and the Rev. M. Tessier, a native of Angers, thirty-two years of age and for two years professor at the seminary of Viviers. Another priest accompanied the Sulpicians, the Very Rev. Canon Delavau of Tours and five young Levites, all speaking English. They were provided with the necessary sacred vessels, vestments & books, and about 130,000 francs were put at their disposal for the establishment of the new seminary.

"The priests of St. Sulpice sent to found a seminary at Baltimore," wrote M. Emery, "will endeavor, above all things, to be inspired by the loftiest ideal of their vocation. They will bear in mind that their seminary is the first and will be for a long time the only institution of the kind in the United States of America, that it is intended to educate in this seminary all the apostolic laborers who in the designs of Providence are destined to strengthen Catholics in their faith, to bring back heretics to the bosom of the Church, to bear the light of the Gospel to the Redskins; in a word, to spread the kingdom of Christ and His Church in a country much larger than the whole of Europe."

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HISTORICAL DATA CONTINUED:

They embarked on April 8, 1791 at St. Malo. Among their fellow-passengers was the celebrated Chateau Briand, at that time a young man of twenty years, for whom the Sulpicians were said to have had no charm. Their voyage lasted three months and two days.

Mr. Nagot lost no time in finding a home for himself and his brethren. He chose the place where the Seminary is still located on Paca Street, which in 1790 was occupied by a public house called "One Mile Tavern." This he at first leased but shortly after, (Oct. 21, 1791) bought for 850 pounds. First Mass was celebrated in the chapel four days after moving and on the 3rd. of October the regular work of the Seminary was begun.

For some years the affairs of the Seminary languished. No native youths joined the Seminarians sent from France. The priests turned to other activities and even established two parishes within the seminary, one being for colored people. Not until 1800 was the first American born student raised to the Priesthood from St. Mary's. M. Nagot remained at the head of the seminary until 1810 and it was during the last years of his office that the building of the chapel was accomplished.

"At present St. Mary's Seminary is centrally located in the city of Baltimore; the site is triangular in form and contains about six acres. Its front, facing east, is on Paca Street, north of Franklin Street. The truncated north end of this triangle, much the shortest side of the whole, is on Druid Hill Avenue. The longest side, on the west, is on St. Mary's Street, extending from Druid Hill Avenue on the north to near Pennsylvania Avenue on the south. Excepting that portion of the seminary directly in front of the centre wing the grounds are enclosed by a high brick wall. There are a number of fine old trees on the premises.

"The central building set back about sixty feet from Paca Street, occupying from south to north about the middle of the lot on the street line. On the lower or south end of the lot stands the old chapel, begun in 1806 and finished and dedicated on June 16, 1808. At the extreme north, on Druid Hill Avenue, a portion of the lot is consecrated as a burial ground, and here repose the remains of the Sulpician Fathers, the forerunners of the present faculty, each grave mound marked by a simple cross of cast-iron, on a central part of which are inscribed their respective names and dates.

"Near the extreme south end of the plot and facing west is the old chapel, a building of about fifty feet front and eighty-five feet in depth. It was designed by Maximillian Godefroy, an architect of considerable note in his day, but much better versed in the Classic than in the Gothic style. He has here combined the two styles and achieved a not un-

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HISTORICAL DATA CONTINUED:

pleasing but truly quaint architectural design. It is built of brick with trimmings of Acquia Creek sandstone. Fancifully moulded bricks are used in some of the clustered columned shafts and in the architraves of all the outer door and window openings. This is probably the earliest instance of the use in the United States of vitrified clay for this species of ornamentation. A high stone stoop leads up to the vestibule of the chapel. The body of the chapel is divided by a row of columns into a nave and two very narrow side aisles. The aisles are vaulted, the nave having a depressed barrel vault, while both vaults, are groined and ribbed. The sanctuary is fairly large and contains a fine white marble altar. The various windows throughout have leaded and figured stained glass of fair workmanship. There is a large sacristy north of the sanctuary; a similar sacristy to the south has been transformed into a Lourdes grotto. Over the west end of the chapel and over the vestibule, there are an organ loft and gallery."

During the summer of 1916 the chapel was completely re-furnished and redecorated. The scheme of decoration follows that commonly found in the fifteenth century in France, Germany and England. As the chapel is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, blue is extensively used. The altar was remodeled and set back into the apse. A tester (the Gothic development of the baldacchino), said to be the first of its kind in America, is suspended from the vault. The floor of the choir and sanctuary has been laid with tile, the capacity of the former is greatly increased and much added space is gained for the latter also. The whole choir is enclosed in screens of oak, according to the ancient custom. The work was designed by and carried out under the direction of Mr. Wilfrid Edwards Anthony of New York. A. B.

In addition to the Chapel at St. Mary's Godefroy designed in Baltimore the "Battle Monument" on Calvert Street between the Court House and the Post Office, which commemorates the Battle of North Point during the war of 1812, and the Unitarian Church at the North west corner of Charles and Franklin Streets. Each monument based on classic tradition is marked by great refinement and the distinction of its design. Godefroy also designed the Masonic Hall, a building later purchased by the city for a Court House, but now no longer standing.

"Maximillian Godefroy had a varied and trying existence. He was an officer of the General Staff (Etat Major) under the old French monarchy. He served in the 18th regiment of infantry and saw service when the allies first invaded France in order to save

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## HISTORICAL DATA CONTINUED:

the monarchy. He lost a brother in the Vendean wars, and he may have taken part in them himself. Later on, owing to his outspoken denunciation of autocratic measures, he was imprisoned at Bellegarde, on the Spanish frontier.

"He was treated kindly by the commandant of the place, so kindly in fact that he managed to escape and cross the frontier. When he learned, however, that the Intendant was in trouble, owing to his flight, he surrendered. Napoleon praised his noble conduct and invited him to enter his service. Godefroy refused and was confined in the Chateau d'If. He was liberated on condition that he would leave France.

"He sailed for the United States, with letters of recommendation to Madison from Theophile Casenove, dated January 5, 1805. He repaired to Philadelphia to meet Madison and to present Casenove's letter to him. The French element in Philadelphia, M. Volozan in particular, befriended him. The Rev. W. Dubourg had offered M. Volozan the teaching of design at St. Mary's College. Volozan warmly recommended Godefroy for this office and by the end of November he was on his way to Baltimore.

"Soon after his arrival he must have drawn the plans of the Seminary Chapel, since the foundations of it were begun May 17, 1806. The work was carried on actively and Latrobe, the architect, congratulated him on the completion of it, at a time when his own plans of the Cathedral must have been as yet in an embryonic stage. On June 16, 1808, Bishop Carroll blessed the Chapel; it was only in 1821 that Archbishop Marechal blessed the Baltimore Cathedral.

"Godefroy entertained the hope that his military talent and experience might secure for him employment by the United States Government. He wrote to President Jefferson (January, 1806) to that effect and in March he tells Madison that he has received no answer. By that time he had probably written "Military Reflections on Four Modes of Defense for the United States....by Max xxx, ex-officer of the Etat Major of S.M.T.C. Translated by Eliza Anderson. The work was published in Baltimore, and printed by Joseph Robinson in 1807. But his expectations were not realized.

"At the declaration of war with England, the architect H. B. Latrobe wrote to the President of the United States suggesting that the talent and experience of Godefroy might be valuable during the struggle. The answer was: "We will not and cannot employ foreigners." However, when Baltimore was threatened by the English, General Samuel Smith accepted his services. Godefroy states that the title of Colonel of the United States Army was granted to him.

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" In 1816, during the summer, he was at Richmond, where his plans for a bank and for the ornamentation around the Court House were carried out under his supervision.

" Notwithstanding his talents and activity, Godefroy was never in financial straits. In 1819, discouraged, he resolved to leave the United States. As his wife, a daughter of Dr. Crawford, was English by birth, he hoped for better prospects in England. He sailed on the Ceres with his wife and step-daughter, Eliza Anderson. Yellow fever broke out on the Ceres and Eliza was taken down with it. She and her parents were put in a boat and landed on the coast. Eliza died in a hut, the only shelter that could be found.

" Godefroy and his wife, however, departed for England. They must have met friends in London. Several years were spent in England, where Godefroy did some artistic work. In 1827 they moved to France. In Paris they were befriended by the Trigant family. Theodore Trigant, who had been graduated by St. Mary's College in 1806, must have had Godefroy as his teacher.

" Godefroy obtained the title of King's Architect and a small pension, which was paid only up to 1830. Finally he secured the position of Architect for the Department of Mayenne, and took up residence at Laval. Mrs. Godefroy died there in 1839.

" A pupil of his who had been graduated at St. Mary's College in 1813, Mr. Ebenezer Jackson of Savannah, became much attached to Godefroy. In a journey to France he sought out his former master; finding him at Laval, he brought him to Paris, and purchased from him a picture which he had drawn during his captivity at Isle d'If. In making it he had had for color only the soot of the stove, but later on he improved it with sepia. In it he represented Charles XII of Sweden at the battle of Pultowa. The picture is still treasured by Miss Jackson, a daughter of Ebenezer Jackson, who lives at Middletown, Connecticut."

A disciple of Godefroy, who was graduated in 1816, Thomas Middleton, has left several works of art. The Seminary has a booklet with his first attempts at drawing.

Architect Latrobe sent two Italian artists who at that time, the year 1808, were working for him on the U.S. Capitol, Monzoné and Franzini, to assist Godefroy in the decorations of the interior.



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The Chapel was dedicated with Bishop Carroll, soon after to be appointed archbishop, officiating. Ever since, it has been used for divine worship. Many ordinations have taken place within the Chapel, the ordinating Prelates being all the Archbishops of Baltimore from John Carroll to his Eminence James, Cardinal Gibbons, and other Prelates of the Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop Carroll's remains rested in a crypt under the sanctuary from 1815 to December 3, 1824 when they were removed to the Baltimore Cathedral. At the present time the remains of the Rev. Francis Charles Nagot, founder of the seminary rest under the sanctuary.

These inscriptions are placed on the outside of the Chapel, a few feet above the pavement on the rear principal axis:

--oOo--

Carolus Franciscus Nagot, Semi<sup>i</sup> S.S. 1<sup>us</sup> Sup<sup>r</sup>  
Cultu SS<sup>ae</sup> Euoh<sup>ae</sup>, humilitate, zelo domus Dei et cleri praestans

--oOo--

Joannes Tessier, Semi<sup>ii</sup> S.S. 2<sup>us</sup>. Sup<sup>r</sup>  
indole simplicissimus, consilio sapientissimus.

--oOo--

Franciscus Dhomme, Semi<sup>is</sup> S.S. 4<sup>us</sup> Sup.  
Semper sibi conetane, disciplinae tenax, in formandis  
clericis indefessus

--oOo--

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HISTORICAL DATA CONTINUED:

This inscription occurs in the floor of the sanctuary immediately in front of the altar.

IN HIS

Hic Jacet  
Franciscus Carolus Nagot,  
Primus Seminarii Baltim. Superior;  
Natus Turonibus in Gallia  
20 Aprilis 1734;  
Obiit 9 Aprilis 1816,  
Expectans beatam spem  
Et adventum gloriæ magni Dei.  
Miseremini mei. Miseremini mei,  
Saltem vos, Amici mei.  
R. I. P.

Over the principal entrance cut in a stone panel is:

'The Lord is in his Holy Temple,  
Let all the Earth keep Silence before Him'.

*John H. Haff*